



Forbes
INSIGHTS

THE REVOLUTION IN TEAMING

ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS, TACTICS
AND TOOLS FOR THE NEW ERA
OF COLLABORATION



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Microsoft

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1. Introduction

We once worked, mostly, alone.

But today's accelerating reality requires teaming: continuously, in real time, and always taking into account the larger picture. In industries such as healthcare and transportation, for instance, teaming is essential to improving outcomes and is becoming more valuable to organizations than ever before. Microsoft's own research shows that workers are now on twice as many teams as they were just five years ago.

Organizations today must pursue continual improvement across a wide range of functions, driven by customers, partners, suppliers and investors. Teaming on this scale requires more than a conscious willingness to innovate. It calls for an array of enabling technologies.

2. *Harnessing The Benefits*

Characteristics that lead to effective teaming are evolving significantly. Companies today need the ability to:



FORM TEAMS RAPIDLY

Opportunities that enable companies to stand out from the competition tend to arise quickly and unexpectedly, and windows of opportunity are often fleeting, conferring the greatest value to first movers. Companies today need to be able to quickly identify such opportunities, then put the right team in place for that purpose.



TRANSCEND TIME AND SPACE

Face-to-face meetings may be nice to have, but they're no longer essential to success. The core goal of any team is to bring the right skills and abilities together, wherever they reside. Top-performing teams engage today's communications and other related technologies to coordinate across time zones and geographies. Teamwork is no longer place- or time-dependent. Rather than working "9 to 5," team members often do their work when it best fits their schedule. This is a vital characteristic, given that in many cases for members of task-focused teams, their contributions go above and beyond the ongoing requirements of their "day job."



MANAGE BOTH EPHEMERAL AND ONGOING TEAMS

Some teams will form as needed, achieve their objective relatively quickly, then dissipate. Others may engage in some initial flurry of activity, meet a short-term goal, then continue to collaborate over time at a lesser level of urgency—perhaps only as a monitor or updating body.



PURSUE GOALS THAT FOCUS ON THE ENTERPRISE

The most innovative or disruptive opportunities tend to be multifunctional in nature. Marketing's desire for lower prices, higher quality and better customer service must be balanced against costs borne by R&D, production, logistics, finance and others. The goal may be to delight the customer, but teamwork enables a more optimal balance across related issues.



ENGAGE THE BROADER ECOSYSTEM

As difficult as it is hearing from—and achieving optimization across—so many internal voices, many of today's end-to-end processes also include external third parties. The most effective teams today are often not only multifunctional but also include external voices such as customers, suppliers and partners.



ENSURE DATA SECURITY

Transcending geography means that workers access enterprise applications and data from outside the office, often using their own laptops and smartphones. Collaborative technologies, therefore, must incorporate the latest advances and innovations in security. The good news is that enterprise and cloud environments can be readily secured to meet the requirements of almost any industry through basic best practices like the use of two-factor authentication.



ENABLE EASE OF ADOPTION AND OPERATION

Leading technologies need to be intuitive and effective so as to encourage adoption. They must also integrate with one another seamlessly, preventing silos as well as workflow, data and versioning issues. Tools should also feature ease of provisioning as well as access control.

3. Advancing Healthcare Through Teaming: St. Luke's

St. Luke's is an Idaho-based, nonprofit healthcare network of hospitals, clinics and outpatient centers

Mention of technology and teaming in healthcare conjures images of telemedicine: streaming video and audio connecting clinical teams from dual locations to diagnose and treat a patient. Ultimately, explains Dr. Marc Chasin, CIO for St. Luke's Health System, the focus needs to be on the customers—patients. “The needs of patients are what should be driving us to constantly reinvent and evolve,” he says.

In healthcare, teams form around a procedure or treatment, research its practice, outcomes and costs, identify the best practice, document its key clinical elements and then develop a formal set of recommendations. While the organization itself is committed to identifying and pursuing such opportunities, team formation tends to be organic.

TEAMING AND TECHNOLOGY

“We are well past the point where teams need to meet face to face to be effective,” says Dr. Chasin. In fact, it's more important to select team members based on knowledge and availability than geography. He explains, “Technology enables small, agile teams to form around a problem, develop a solution, execute what's needed, then dissipate, reforming only as needed for updates or reviews.”

Regardless of the nature of the collaboration or

teaming in healthcare, one common thread is that you need the right collaboration technologies—which vary widely depending on the mission—to make advances.

This is particularly important in healthcare because the sorts of people whose time and expertise is essential to this process of advancing best practices typically have day jobs. Step one in team-focused technology assembly is to identify a common platform so that all are using the same software and collaboration processes.

At St. Luke's, there's a standard, centralized “source of truth.” People can work remotely but also simultaneously or asynchronously as the situation requires. It might be a Word document on a prescribed best practice that needs to be implemented across a region or an accountability matrix on an Excel spreadsheet. “But in every case, whatever team member is taking action on an assigned task, they can work when it fits into their work and life schedule with no multiple versioning or duplication of effort,” says Dr. Chasin. “Technology enables you to build the strongest teams, gain access to the right people and let everyone work in the way that's most effective for them personally. There are so many changes in healthcare where greater cooperation is essential, and it is technology that drives the value of teaming.”



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4. The Cultural Shift

Teaming leads to innovation. This can be viewed as a threat to traditional organizational charts and processes, as cross-functional teaming often leads to wholesale disruption of prior practice. Leaders in their respective fields no longer optimize their businesses one function or geography at a time. Instead, they use global teams to pursue improvements to end-to-end processes. Such cross-functional teaming can be disconcerting in that often team-driven solutions lead to wholesale disruption of prior practice.

The challenge of change management cannot be underestimated. Senior management must set the expectation that managers and workers alike will embrace cross-functional collaboration and teaming. The clear expectation needs to become: the focus is end-to-end, cross-functional performance optimization, and where appropriate, teams will form and be empowered to make change happen.

For effective teaming, clear objectives must be established. Teams must have a clear sense of their reason for existing. Managers, and in turn teams, need to be shown a clear hierarchy of objectives and insights into which issues are immediate and urgent.

5. *The Enabling Technologies*

Thirty years ago, even long-distance phone calls needed audit oversight to prevent undue costs. Today, in stark contrast, workers have unprecedented access to data and communications tools, including:



CONFERENCING

Some of the most widely used teaming tools include voice, video and online meetings. These are relatively inexpensive, easy to use and extremely helpful in keeping team members engaged, up to speed and coordinated with group progress.



VIDEO

Video adds even more depth to the quality of interaction, as team members can see one another's facial expressions during conversations. The mere act of "seeing" makes interactions more real and meaningful and can help build understanding and cooperation. Desktop or even phone-enabled tools like Skype are a particularly effective means of improving the quality of communication among team members. Skype is easy to launch and use, making it an attractive platform for everything from formal to opportunistic interaction.



EMAIL

Email is an essential means for communicating in detail while enabling the receivers to consume and respond to the information within their own time zone or workflow.



CHAT-CENTERED WORKSPACE

Chat provides greater immediacy—even intimacy—combined with the receiver's option to respond when convenient. Chat-centered workspaces like Microsoft Teams allow employees to communicate in the moment, through private chats or meetings for smaller group conversations. Teams are easily able to pull in the content and tools they need for quick access to information.



DOCUMENT SHARING

Teams make use of tools like SharePoint or OneDrive to provide members with access to the latest version of any document. Again, this is an essential tool, as it reduces the risk of multiple versions while at the same time allowing all to collaborate regardless of time zone or availability.



ENTERPRISE "SOCIAL" MEDIA

Leaders in teaming use tools like Yammer to supercharge collaboration. Formally and informally, users can share documents, blogs and videos, as well as engage in conversations transcending time and space. Workers can search for information on specific needs or simply use the tool to stay connected and engaged with fellow workers. Yammer can be especially useful to teams, helping members communicate, interact and share as needed.

Relative to the last 30 years, each of the above tools is a revolution in itself. But when such tools are combined seamlessly within a single platform like Office 365, they fuel the broader revolution of communication, collaboration and teaming. So the challenge for organizations today isn't one of merely providing such tools but rather of ensuring their seamless functionality. Tools that work spur adoption.



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6. Transforming Travel: Teaming At Finnair

With over €2 billion in revenues in 2015, Finnair is Finland's largest air carrier

Complex and intimate collaboration and teaming are essential to Digital Vision 2020, Finnair Oyj's digital transformation initiative. But teaming for an airline, explains Katri Harra-Salonen, chief digital officer, is no easy matter. Since those needed to get things done are also often traveling themselves, teaming for the air carrier requires leading-edge collaborative technologies that can help shift time and place.

One of the most effective tools in identifying opportunities for innovation as well as coordinating teams within Finnair is Yammer. "Yammer enables so many connections across the enterprise," says Harra-Salonen. "People can exchange ideas and discover others who have found solutions or are working on similar topics."

A perfect example is a recent technology fair. Finnair staff in attendance did not have a line relationship to one another but were still needed to have an active dialogue to share what they were seeing and learning during the one-day event. With only minor effort, "Yammer allowed our personnel to identify one another and share information in real time," says Harra-Salonen, meaning "that we could take actions sooner on opportunities for startups, partnerships and innovation—a direct business benefit."

Once a business opportunity is more clearly understood, and more formal objectives and team

relationships are established, collaboration moves to more task-focused tools. Finnair uses Office 365 Groups, which lets team members work together on projects and documents in a more structured way.

Another tool the staff finds extremely useful is Skype for Business. "We like Skype, because many times it's beneficial for team members to see one another," says Harra-Salonen. "This can foster clearer understanding and better collaboration."

"Our aim is to provide lovable digital services to our customers and personnel alike – for us these are a crucial element when improving the employee experience."

A TECHNOLOGY OUTREACH?

Though many Digital Vision 2020 projects are still in early-phase conceptualization, Harra-Salonen believes teaming will play an increasingly critical role. In fact, one new and fresh idea Finnair is considering is exchanging team members with technology providers—or entire teams—as a way of accelerated learning and improved collaboration. Bottom line, the goal is to transform the whole of travel in ways that improve the experience and service for customers—and not only improve their own internal operations, but also the [entire] travel ecosystem.

7. Enable Your Performance

The ability to organize and enable teams is becoming a key driver of competitive advantage. Success in this new epoch requires mastery of a range of communication and collaboration technologies. To be effective, such tools must be intuitive, interoperable, secure and easily provisioned as needed. All of this is no less than a revolution in the role, formation, function and value of teams. Leaders are seizing this opportunity to drive the sort of performance that creates a competitive edge.

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